DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 872 CG 013 660

AUTHOR Goff, Susan B.
TITLE Career and Family Plans of College Students.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Patterns; *Career Choice; *Career Development; College Students; Decision Making; Family Planning; Life Style; *Role Conflict; *Sex Differences; *Student Attitudes; *Success Factors

ABSTRACT

Factors which mediate the life decisions of college men and women were examined. Undergraduates (N=107) completed questionnaires about career and family plans, notions of success and failure, integration of two potentially conflicting roles, and the relationship between personal values, life goals, and choices. Results indicated that: (1) women anticipate entering helping professions; (2) men decide on careers which yield personal enjoyment and intellectual challenge rather than those which benefit others; (3) salary as a criterion for career success is more salient for men; (4) men see job competition and personal failure as obstacles to career development whereas women see children and family as greater obstacles; and (5) both sexes claim they would readjust their work schedule to accommodate family needs. (Author/HLM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

- ED174872

Career and Family Plan of College Students

Susan B. Goff
University of Michigan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan B. Goff

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

CG013660

Paper presented at Symposium of Professional Women: integration of multiple careers at American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, 1978.

CN001710

Unequal participation of the sexes in the domain of employment has become increasingly difficult to ignore. Although increasing numbers of women are working, these women are concentrated in the lower levels of the professional hierarchy. Although institutional barriers and sex-typing of jobs may be somewhat responsible for the partite job market, it can not be held entirely responsible. There is evidence of other factors which might contribute to the underrepresentation of women in professional fields by influencing the career aspirations of young women, thereby predetermining the type of training and skills they acquire in preparation for their career.

In this discussion, I propose to examine this set of intrapsychic variables; particularly those associated with the value and motivational components of an expectancy x value model of task choice. I will also speak of the behavioral and attitudinal outcroppings of these basic value structures within the professional domain and in relation to other life choices (such as dicisions to marry or become a parent).

Previous work relating motivational factors to career choice has been dominated by the work in need achievement, in particular work by McClelland and Atkinson. While Atkinson's need achievement model predicted men's career aspirations and related adult achievement behaviors reasonabley well, it did not reliably predict either women's adult achievement behaviors or career aspirations. In an effort to account for the failure of Atkinson's model to predict female adult achievement patterns, Horner posited the existence of an additional avoidance motive: the fear of success motive. Based on the comparison of the responses of college men and women to a cue addressing "John's" or "Anne's" success in medical school, Horner concluded that women

have a higher fear of success than men; and that fear of success does interfere with achievement behavior in some settings. She generalized these results to the broader domain of adult achievement patterns- including career aspirations. Subsequent research and theoretical analysis have not substantiated these conclusions. Thus, despite initial enthusiasm acclaiming fear of success as the key to understanding achievement behavior, Horner's model has only unlocked the door of "Added Confusion".

We believe that the failure of both of these achievement models to account for women's achievement behavior lies in their narrow operationalization of success and achievement goals. The achievement tasks selected and the criteria of success were usually individual tasks on which success is directly the result of an individual's actions rather than a more cooperative or group achievement and on which there is an emphasis on ends as opposed to means. It seems as if the assumptions underlying both the traditional Atkinsonian achievement model and Horner's subsequent refinement reflected an "agency" type perspective of achievement: in other words, a personal achievement with a view of the self as separate from others, and success as a result of one's own actions and attributes.

The shortcomings of the traditional achievement path, to me, are perfectly clear. In the first place, the focus of the motive is almost entirely goal directed, ignoring the process involved in gaining the final reward, and traditional achievement models also reflect this bias. For example, Horner defined fear of success as the negative consequences of achieving success. She interpreted responses alluding to Anne's lonely Saturday nights, for instance, as a projection of the fear that success would cause rejection. It seems much more likely that the women were assessing the costs of success

in terms of what they would actually have to do to achieve it. The existence of an alternate achievement path with a communal orientation is self-evident. Veroff also recognized the need to dissect the more global concept of achievement models), implies agency as it is related to the urge to master, regardless of the means of mastery.

Secondly, agency-biased models consistently ignore any motive systems other than the one stemming from a simple need to achieve. Douvan and Adelson as well as Hoffman noted the part that the motive to affiliate plays in the development of self-esteem. Hoffman proposed that affiliation promoted feelings of success in women, and furthermore was an affirmation of the self. But neither of these papers connected women's perceived value of social behavior with achievement motivation. As suggested by Stein and Bailey, we see affiliative factors as integral to female achievement motives.

My theoretical approach to the differential career choices of men and women is based on Bakan's suggestion that there are two fundamental modalities of life: "agency" and "communion": that these modalities encompass both values and motivation, and that men and women, as collectives, differ in their orientation to these modalities. Women, much more than men, have been characterized as conforming to the "communion" disposition of existence by their openness, noncontractual cooperation, and desire to be at one with others. In contrast, men's orientation to life goals traditionally conform more to the agency modality: or self- tection, self-assertion, self-expansion, the urge to master, and to rem e from others. Within a motivational framework, communion can be desc an integration of achievement and affiliative needs and agency as a segregation of achievement and affiliative needs. In other words, needs to excel or achieve and needs for approval or affiliation

are interrelated issues for those people with a communion orientation and completely unrelated issues for those with an agency orientation. If there is a tendency for people to distinguish themselves by alliance to one of the two modalities, and it is not invalid to assume that achievement motivation can be incorporated into this model, then many facets of behavior, including life and career goals, should be affected.

In an investigation of college students' considerations for choosing a particular career, Astin found that women appeared to be more motivated by intrinsic considerations and men by extrinsic considerations. In particular, women were more likely than men to endorse the following job characteristics as influential in their career choice: relevance of the field to their intrinsic interests, the opportunity to work with ideas and people, to be helpful to others, and to express one's identity. More men than women rated the following as important job characteristics: the opportunity for high salaries, high prestige, rapid advancement, and a stable future. The value structures reflected in these responses are directly applicable to Bakan's description of communion and agency orientations. The desire to be at one with others, to gain rewards through one's interaction with others is indicative of a communion orientation, while the desire to be both separate from "the people" and to ascend to a position which few attain and many respect, reflects a more agentic orientation.

These types of data reinforced our belief that value orientations, particularly those described by Bakan, would not only be helpful in the attempt to discover why women are not choosing to participate in most high status professions, but would also help unravel the "mystery of the motive to achieve" in women as achievement is so closely attached to career choice and success. We believe the failure of both Atkinson's and Horner's model to illuminate

the area of female achievement behavior is the consequence of neglecting a more communion type perspective.

Looking at achievement and success from a communal perspective raises issues which have not been fully considered in the past. Agentic rewards alone offer little reinforcement for communion oriented people. Agency type rewards can be defined as the fulfillment of long term goals which serve one's own needs rather than other's. The attention of a communion oriented person is directed toward the factors mediating the actual achievement of the goal, and the ability of these factors to meet affiliative needs. The worth of a goal can not be estimated without regard to continued intrinsic interest in the task, possible affiliative loss or gain, possible benefit or harm to others, and/or the liklihood that the pursuit of the task will lead to the realization of certain intrapsychic goals.

If women, for the most part, do consider communal factors when they make career decisions, then it is not surprising that many high-status professions are still largely male dominated. Most of these professions have a reputation for demanding a lot of time and energy and offering only superficial working relationships with colleagues. This kind of stereotype would easily deter a young woman, with dreams of being married and having children, from aspiring to the profession.

However, we suggest that the most important contribution that the communal perspective makes is the transformation of the question, "Why aren't high need-achievement women aspiring to high status careers (or why can't women be more like men)?" to "Why do women aspire to pursue careers that they choose?"

Our questionnaire was formulated in order to help us discover the factors that mediate college men and women's life decisions. We asked 107 undergraduates about their career and family plans and what would have to happen in each

in order for them to consider it a success or failure. We asked them how they planned to integrate these two potentially conflicting roles: for instance what they would do if their spouse wanted to move for career related reasons: to see which held greater priority in their life plans. We also asked them to rank and rate a set of value laden life goals in order to explore the relationship between values, life goals, and choices.

Our data showed that women anticipate entering helping professions, in particular psychology, social work, teaching, and nursing; where men tend to aspire to non-helping careers, in particular law and engineering ($p < .02$). Medicine is the only helping profession which men in our sample select, however their major consideration in deciding upon their career seems to be personal enjoyment and intellectual challenge rather than benefit to others. These reasons, along with a potential for high salary, capture men's primary considerations for choosing a career. The majority of women also cite personal enjoyment and intellectual challenge as important in career decisions, but are far more likely to include benefit to others as a key factor.

Salary, as a criterion of career success, seems to be more salient for men than for women. Career success is best indicated, for women, by achieving expected career goals, gaining the respect of their colleagues, enjoyment of their career, and being of service to others. In addition to their concern for salary, men would also consider their career successful if they achieved traditional goals and if they were respected by others because of this achievement.

There are major differences between men and women in their perception of obstacles to their own career development. Men perceive job competition and personal failure or laziness as major obstacles where women do not; and women overwhelmingly consider children and family as greater obstacles to their career development where men do not ($p < .0000$). Additionally, men perceive

children and family to be a greater obstacle to their wife's career than women feel it to be an obstacle to their husband's career. Interestingly neither men nor women see their spouse's mobility as an obstacle to career development.

Both women and men claim that they would readjust their work schedule to accomodate the "needs of their family". One wonders how males are interpreting this statement when the projections for the integration of child-rearing and career plans are set forth. When their children are infants, 77% of the women plan to be primarily responsible for childcare and 22% plan to share childrearing with their spouse. As for men, 55% expect their spouse to primarily responsible for childrearing and 38% expect to share responsibilities. These figures seem to indicate that males are taking on a more liberal attitude. However, 70% of the men plan to work full time during this period. Most men do not plan to take time off working to help raise their children, but if they do, they plan to resume working after one month or less. Women, on an average do not plan to resume working until the child is at least nursery school age. Most plan to resume work after the child enters elementary school.

Our sample consisted of a population of reasonably high achievement oriented men and women. All of them were strongly committed to finishing school and entering into a career. We assumed that because of this, we would not have many highly communal types of people in our sample. Therefore, we concluded that there would be less variance among communal measures, but that we would be able to make finer distinctions between low and high agency people.

The index for measuring levels of agency and communion was based on the separation of prospective careers into helping and non-helping categories and upon the life goals which were particularly distinguished by their relationship

to either the helping or non-helping careers. From this evolved four categorizations: high and low agency, and high and low communion; agency and communion not being mutually exclusive.

It appears that low communion people, according to our indices, are not significantly different in appearance from low agency-type people: although both are significantly different from high agency and high communion. The similarity between these two categories may be a function of the character of the population. We expect the subjects must be somewhat agentic in order to desire to achieve in school and enter into careers; so low communion would be somewhat washed out by the higher levels of agency.

The configuration of low agency as opposed to high agency behaviors, and high communion as opposed to low communion behaviors, well-described the projected career and family plans of the average woman in our sample. At the same time the average man closely resembled the behavioral type characterized by high agency and also by low communion.

It is interesting to compare the interactions between attitudes inherent in agency and communion, and gender. Significantly more women than men are either high communion and low agency or low communion and high agency; and significantly more men than women are both high communion and high agency ($p < .04$). We presume that this phenomenon is a reflection of the woman's attempt to resolve the conflict between her desire to fulfill socially prescribed communal goals as well as agentic goals. Women are not able to pursue their careers without sacrificing time that they might feel they should spend ministering to the needs of their family. Therefore, they are maneuvered into a position of having to make a choice between the courses of behavior. Either they will espouse a highly agentic mode and forsake their communal goals, or communion values will take precedence and they will follow the dictates of that orientation.

As child and family care are natural extensions of a highly communal desire to be of service to others, it is not surprising that they are an integral part of a woman's communion path: added to the fact that this route is highly encouraged by both other women and men. Men are better able to proclaim both high agency and high communion orientations because they are allowed to be extremely committed to their career as well as their family without spending the time performing the duties of primary caretaker. There is no conflict, and no need to adjust one set of goals to accomodate the other.

In conclusion, it appears that women are much more likely to express interest in helping careers in order to increase the probability of realizing certain communion goals. As these goals and values are of foremost importance women are also willing to take time off their career to bear major childrearing responsibilities. Their willingness to interrupt their career for the sake of their family is inconsistent with the drive that is needed to achieve success in traditional high-status professions. Hence, women encounter two significant obstacles to entering and succeeding in high-status professional careers. The first lies in the nature of the job itself and the second in the resolution of the problem of childrearing and family care. If we care to see women in these professions, external supports, such as good quality daycare, must be generated and popularized; and women must be able to mold a career more consistent with their personal value systems within more stereotypically agentic careers.

References

Atkinson, J.W. Motives in fantasy action and society. Princeton: Van Nostrard 1958

Bakan, D. The duality of human existence. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966.

Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. College graduates and jobs. New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1973.

Condry, J., & Dyer, S. Fear of success: Attribution of cause to the victim. Journal of Social Issues, 1976, 32, (3), 63-83.

Douvan, E., & Adelson, J. The adolescent experience. New York: Wiley, 1966

Hoffman, L. Early childhood experiences and women's achievement motives. Journal of Social Issues, 1972, 28, 129-156.

Horner, M. Sex differences in achievement motivation and performance in competitive and non-competitive situations. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968

Stein, A. & Bailey, M. The socialization of achievement orientation in women. Psychological Bulletin, 1973, 80, 345-364.

Veroff, J. Process vs. impact in men's and women's motivation. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1977, 1, 283-293.